

I/We Claim:

1. A method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool, comprising:
transmitting, to one or more suppliers, a request for product cost information for a product to be provided by the one or more suppliers;
receiving product cost information from the one or more suppliers;
electronically storing the product cost information from the one or more suppliers;
receiving a sales price for the product;
using the received sales price and the product cost information, calculating a profit margin for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers; and
displaying the calculated profit margins for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers.

2. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 1, wherein
the request for product cost information is transmitted to each of a plurality of suppliers;
the product cost information is received from each of the plurality of suppliers;
the profit margin for sale of the product is calculated for each of the plurality of suppliers; and
the displayed profit margins for sale of the product includes the profit margin calculated for each of the plurality of suppliers.

3. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 1, wherein
the request for product cost information is transmitted to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail; and
the product cost information is received from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail.

4. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 1, further including obtaining the product cost information from the one or more suppliers by

providing a cost sheet listing cost components of the product to the one or more suppliers; and

receiving the cost sheet containing costs for the cost components from the one or more suppliers.

5. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 4, further including

providing the cost sheet to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail;

receiving the cost sheet containing costs for the cost components from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail; and

importing the costs for the cost components from the received cost sheet.

6. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 1, further including:

defining the product to be provided by one or more suppliers.

7. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 1, further including graphically displaying the cost information from the one or more suppliers.

8. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 7, further including graphically displaying the cost information for the product for each of the suppliers.

9. A method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool, comprising:

defining a plurality of products to be provided by one or more suppliers;

obtaining, from one or more suppliers, cost information for purchase of each of the products from the one or more suppliers;
receiving a sales price for each of the products;
determining a profit margin for sales of each of the products if supplied by the one or more suppliers; and
simultaneously displaying for each of the products the determined profit margins.

10. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 9, wherein

the cost information for purchase of each product is obtained from each of a plurality of suppliers associated with the product;

for each product, the profit margin of the product is determined if provided by each of the plurality of suppliers associated with the product; and

the displayed profit margins include determined profit margins for sales of each product for each of the plurality of suppliers associated the product.

11. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 10, further including obtaining the cost information for each of the products from the one or more suppliers by

requesting the cost information for each product from each of the plurality of suppliers by electronic mail; and

receiving the cost information for each product from each of the plurality of suppliers by electronic mail.

12. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 11, further including obtaining the cost information for the product from the one or more suppliers by

preparing a cost sheet for each product listing cost components of the product; and

providing the cost sheets to each of the plurality of suppliers to be completed with the cost information.

13. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 12, where the cost sheet for one of the products includes different cost components than the cost sheet for another of the products.

14. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 12, further including

preparing the cost sheet in an electronic format; and
providing the cost sheet to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail.

15. A method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool, comprising:

defining a plurality of products for purchase, such that each product is associated with one or more suppliers that may provide the product;

obtaining cost information for purchase of each of the products from the one or more suppliers associated with product;

electronically storing the cost information for each of the products obtained from the one or more suppliers associated with the product; and

simultaneously displaying the cost information for two or more of the products.

16. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 15, further including graphically displaying the cost information for each product.

17. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 15, wherein

the cost information for at least one product is obtained from each of a plurality of suppliers associated with the at least one product; and

the simultaneously displayed cost information includes the cost information for the at least one product and each supplier associated with the at least one product.

18. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 17, wherein the cost information for the at least one product is graphically displayed.

19. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 15, further including obtaining the cost information for each of the products from the one or more suppliers by

requesting the cost information for each product from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail; and

receiving the cost information for each product from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail.

20. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 15, further including obtaining the cost information for the product from the one or more suppliers by

preparing a cost sheet for each product listing cost components of the product; and

providing the cost sheets to the one or more suppliers to be completed with the cost information.

21. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 20, wherein the cost sheet for one of the products includes different cost components than the cost sheet for another of the products.

22. The method of managing cost information by a fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 20, further including

preparing the cost sheet in an electronic format; and

providing the cost sheet to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail.

23. A fact based negotiation tool for providing information to help a user negotiate purchases, comprising:

a cost sheet preparation component for preparing and transmitting, to one or more suppliers, a request for product cost information for a product to be provided by the one or more suppliers;

a cost information import component that receives and electronically stores product cost information provided by the one or more suppliers in a database; and

a view cost sheets component that displays product cost information provided by one of the one or more suppliers.

24. The fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 23, further including a compare costing component that displays product cost information provided by two or more of the one or more suppliers can be displayed simultaneously.

25. The fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 23, further including an analyze margins component that receives a sales price for the product, uses the received sales price and the product cost information to calculate a profit margin for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers, and displays the calculated profit margins for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers.

26. The fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 25, further including a graph costs component that graphically displays the calculated profit margins and the product cost information provided by the one or more suppliers.

27. The fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 25, further including a graph costs component that graphically displays the product cost information provided by the one or more suppliers.

28. The fact based negotiation tool recited in claim 23, further including a database that stores product cost information provided by the one or more suppliers.

29. A computer-readable medium having computer-executable instructions for performing steps comprising:

- transmitting, to one or more suppliers, a request for product cost information for a product to be provided by the one or more suppliers;
- receiving product cost information from the one or more suppliers;
- electronically storing the product cost information from the one or more suppliers;
- receiving a sales price for the product;
- using the received sales price and the product cost information, calculating a profit margin for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers; and
- displaying the calculated profit margins for sale of the product if supplied by each of the one or more suppliers.

30. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 29, wherein the instructions provide that:

- the request for product cost information is transmitted to each of a plurality of suppliers;
- the product cost information is received from each of the plurality of suppliers;
- the profit margin for sale of the product is calculated for each of the plurality of suppliers; and
- the displayed profit margins for sale of the product includes the profit margin calculated for each of the plurality of suppliers.

31. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 29, wherein the instructions provide that:

- the request for product cost information is transmitted to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail; and
- the product cost information is received from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail.

32. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 29, wherein the instructions provide that the step of obtaining the product cost information from the one or more suppliers includes:

providing a cost sheet listing cost components of the product to the one or more suppliers; and

receiving the cost sheet containing costs for the cost components from the one or more suppliers.

33. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 32, further including instructions for performing the steps of:

providing the cost sheet to the one or more suppliers by electronic mail;

receiving the cost sheet containing costs for the cost components from the one or more suppliers by electronic mail; and

importing the costs for the cost components from the received cost sheet.

34. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 29, further including instructions for performing the step of defining the product to be provided by one or more suppliers.

35. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 29, further including instructions for performing the step of graphically displaying the cost information from the one or more suppliers.

36. The computer-readable medium recited in claim 29, further including instructions for performing the step of graphically displaying the cost information for the product for each of the suppliers.